

INFLUENZA VACCINES

PATIENT INFORMATION

Please read this leaflet carefully before receiving your vaccine. If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, please ask the nurse at your appointment or call Occupational Health on 03333 449089.

ABOUT FLU

Flu is a serious disease which can infect anyone. Common symptoms include sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain and extreme fatigue, dry cough, sore throat and stuffy nose.

For people at risk of complications, flu can lead to hospitalisation or even death. In rare cases flu can kill otherwise healthy people. Flu leads to hundreds of thousands of GP visits and tens of thousands of hospital stays a year. Even if you do not feel you need to protect yourself, getting the flu vaccine will help to reduce the spread of the disease, and so reduce the chance of passing on the flu virus to other people who may be at risk of flu. Other methods can include good hygiene including using tissues when coughing or sneezing as the viruses are spread through droplets and disposal of used tissues. Frequent handwashing when infected is also recommended.

ABOUT THE VACCINE

Each year, the World Health Organization (WHO) identifies the viruses that are most likely to cause flu and the vaccines are made to match them as closely as possible. Therefore, annual flu vaccine strains vary so each year so the vaccine needs to be administered annual basis to provide ongoing protection from flu.

For the season 2024/25 the adult vaccine i.e. those aged from 18 years to 64 years is the Quadrivalent vaccine (QIVe), which protects against four types of flu virus:

- an A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- an A/Thailand/8/2022 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus

Those who have their 65th birthday on or before 31st March 2025, should see their own GP to be administered with the adjuvanted quadrivalent influenza vaccine (aQIV) or the high-dose quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIV-HD).

WHO SHOULD HAVE A FLU JAB

Flu can be unpleasant, but if you are otherwise healthy it will usually clear up on its own within 1-2 weeks.

However, flu can be more severe in certain people, such as:

- anyone aged 65 and over
- pregnant women
- children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or respiratory disease)
- children and adults with weakened immune systems
- health and social care staff directly involved in patient care

Anyone in these risk groups is more likely to develop potentially serious complications of flu, such as pneumonia (a lung infection), so it's recommended that they have a flu vaccine every year to protect them.

WHO SHOULD NOT HAVE A FLU JAB

Very few people are unable to have the flu jab, but you should avoid it if you have had a serious allergic reaction to the flu jab in the past.

People who have egg allergy may be at increased risk of reaction to the injectable flu vaccine because some flu jabs are made using eggs.

In recent years, flu jabs that are egg-free have become available. An egg-free flu vaccine isn't available from Occupational Health but your GP may be able to find a suitable flu vaccine with a low egg content. Depending on the severity of your egg allergy, your GP may need to refer you to a specialist to have the vaccination in hospital.

If you are ill with a fever, it's best to delay your flu vaccination until you have recovered. There is no need to delay your flu jab if you have a minor illness with no fever such as a cold.

It is fine to have the flu jab while you are taking antibiotics.

Protection after having the vaccine is usually achieved 14 days after having the vaccine.

FLU JAB SIDE EFFECTS

Serious side effects of the injected flu vaccine are very rare. You may have a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days after having the jab, and your arm may be a bit sore where you were injected.

MEDICAL IN CONFIDENCE

You cannot catch flu from the vaccine.

If you notice any changes in your health after receiving the vaccine, please contact Occupational Health or see your GP.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1010970/Influenza_vaccination_information_document_for_healthcare_practitioners.pdf

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